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GREENE COUNTY, GEORGIA

(The Story of One Southern County)

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About 160 years ago Greene County, Georgia, was a fertile county covered with pines and oak trees, crisscrossed with clear streams, and inhabited by Cherokee and Creek Indians. It had been given the name of General Nathaniel Greene, the military leader who delivered the Carolinas and Georgia from British rule. What follows is the story of that county's decline -- its slow march through two wars and countless disasters to the impoverishment of its people and the ruin of its land. It is also the story of renewed hope, for since 1938 Greene County has been the scene of a unified public effort to rebuild its broken-down economy.

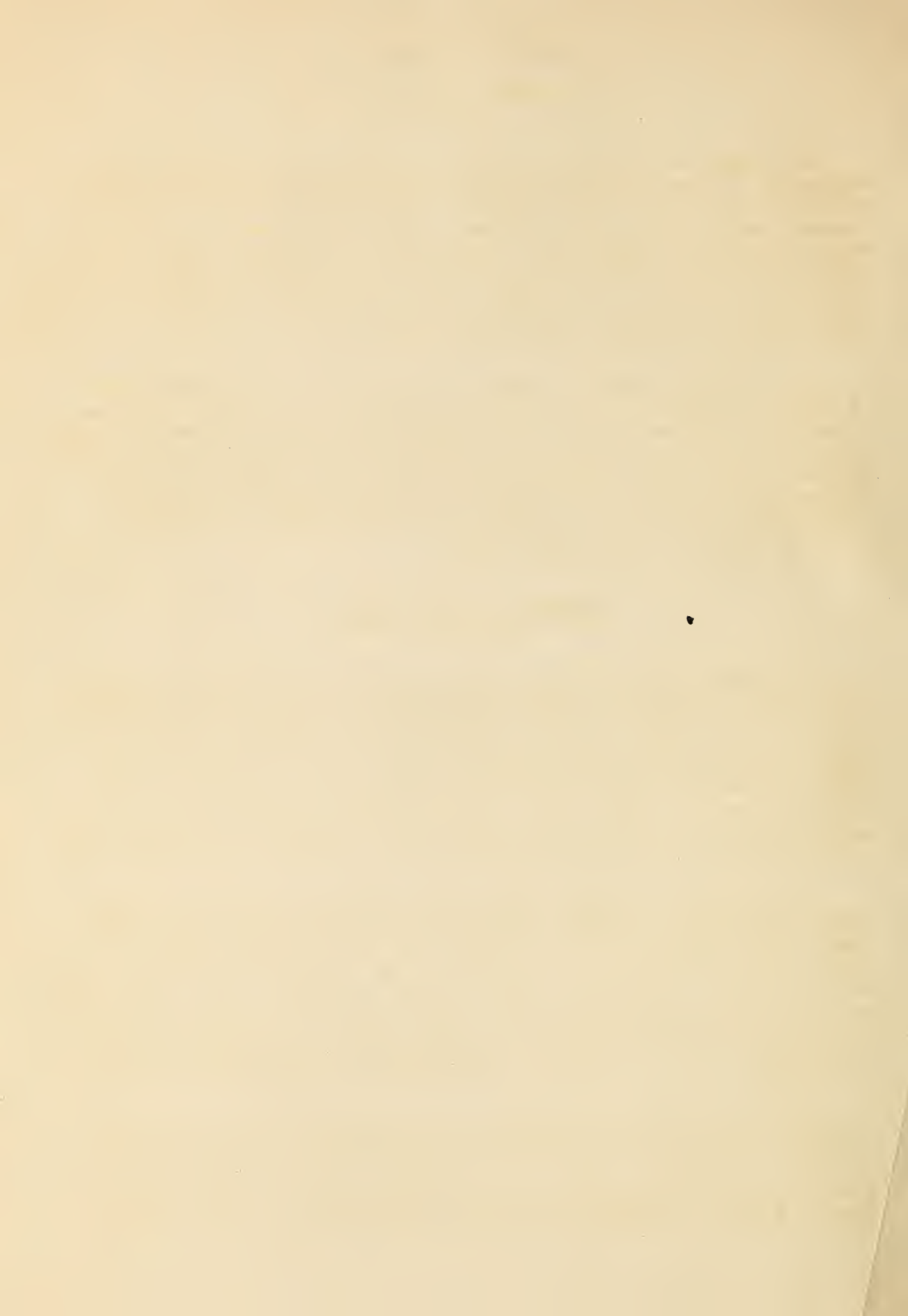
Greene County marks a dividing line between the fertile "red lands" of Northern Georgia and the poorer "grey lands" of the middle section. Situated in the lower part of the Piedmont Plateau, about midway between Augusta and Atlanta, it has an area of 416 square miles. The Negro population is slightly more than fifty per cent. It has always been a predominantly rural county, with only two of its cities, Greensboro and Union Point, now having a population of more than 500. Greensboro, with 2500 people, is the largest town.

Decline of Greene County

The "Golden Age" for Greene County came soon after the earliest settlers moved in during the first part of the nineteenth century, and continued up to the outbreak of the War between the States. This was an era of prosperity built on self-sufficient agriculture. The growing of corn, and later cotton, as a cash crop, did not keep the farmers from raising vegetables in their own gardens. People were able to live off their own land to a large extent, and had enough other resources to meet such living expenses as required cash outlay. In 1860, Greene County was one of the most prosperous in Georgia.

The War between the States drained from the county many of its resources and most of its cash. Consequently, at the end of the war the impoverished farmers were able to raise only those crops which they could grow on credit. That meant cotton. Greene became a cotton county. Cotton -- and a little corn -- but not much of anything else. The Golden Age of diversified farming and home-grown vegetables was gone. Intensive, soil-depleting farming and the continual planting of cotton in the same fields year after year took their usual toll in eroded gullies and vanished topsoil.

The development of a considerable dairy industry in the early 1900's made Greene County one of the most important dairy sections in Georgia, and for a time there appeared to be hope for at least a two-way diversification in cash crops. Then came the World War, and with the war came 40-cent cotton. One tract of pasture after another was turned back to



cotton in order to reap the passing benefits of wartime prices; and the young dairy industry was practically wiped out.

The war came to an end. Deflation and the boll weevil marched through Georgia, and cotton production in Greene County dropped from 20,030 bales in 1919 to 333 bales in 1922. Only one small bank in the poorer "grey land" section escaped the plunge into bankruptcy. By this time the pre-war dairy industry was no more than the bitter memory of a lost investment. There was no turning back to dairying; it takes a large investment to start in the dairy business and nearly everybody in Greene was broke.

It is almost impossible to indicate with words or figures the full extent of the decline during the next ten years. Everything dropped to about one-sixth of its former value. The value of all farm property collapsed from \$12,311,391 in 1929 to \$2,914,492 in 1939. The bottom dropped out of land values; in 1920 Greene County land was worth \$8,189,205; ten years later the same land would have brought only \$1,263,633. The value of all crops fell from nearly \$6,000,000 to about \$1,000,000 during the ten-year period. In 1930, only 11,000 acres were planted in cotton out of the 56,000 acres which had grown cotton ten years before.

The people on the land tried every expedient they could think of, in a desperate attempt to stem the tide of complete bankruptcy. Plantation owners had sawmills moved onto their land and cut away thousands of acres of timber in order to get ready cash. The sawmills moved out again, leaving scattered cut-over areas all over the county, their value depreciated and their fine forests gone.

By 1927, about 16,000 acres of land had been sold for taxes, and another 12,000 had been forfeited to mortgage companies. Three years later fifty per cent of the land in the county had been abandoned. For a short period rabbits flourished on the abandoned fields, and in one year Greene County exported more rabbits than any other county in the United States. The rabbit "industry," however, was never more than a flourish, and when the rabbits became diseased and died by the thousands the abandoned land again reverted to uselessness.

The many streams, which once had been clear and filled with fish, were by this time so obstructed by logs and weeds that drainage was seriously slowed up. Dredging work on the smaller streams came to a standstill. Natural dams formed, in some cases piling up so high that local floods were caused and fertile bottom lands had to be abandoned. Slowly-moving or stagnant ponds formed ideal breeding places for mosquitoes, and malarial fever was a constant threat.

Hundreds of landlords lost their land. In 1920 there were 3,000 farms in the county; but by 1930 there were only 1,761 farms left. Of 2,377 owners listed by the Census of 1920, only 416 were still owners when the census taker came around after ten years. The number of tenant-

operated farms showed a corresponding increase, from 512 in 1920 to 1,296 in 1930. Many landlords who retained nominal title to their land pulled out and allowed the tenants to remain on the land if they could make a living. Many of them could not, and between 1920 and 1930 the county lost more than a third of its population. Young people saw no hope of anything but lifelong destitution if they stayed in Greene County. So they migrated, traveling to other sections of Georgia or to other states -- not because they hoped for something better, but because they were convinced that the situation elsewhere could not possibly be worse than it was in their native county.

Those who remained had little to look forward to. The whites in the county had an average annual cash income of only \$301.26, and the Negroes had to get along on half that much. The depression years, in fact, had halved the Negroes' average cash incomes from \$302.06 in 1927 to \$150.74 in 1934. Belated attempts were made to go back to the system of growing one's own food at home. When the cotton market hit rock bottom at 5 and 6 cents a pound, the planters "first encouraged and then instructed their tenants to raise foodstuffs; garden plots were set aside, wire and paling fences were put up; pig pens and cows on chains were more in evidence." Between 1927 and 1934, the Negroes in Greene County raised the proportion of their home-grown provisions from 25 to 53 per cent of their gross income.

Low cash income made it impossible for the farmers to keep up the repairs on their houses and other buildings. By 1938 it was estimated that fully 50 per cent of the houses in the county were unoccupied, and unfit for human occupancy. Moreover, half of the houses still used as dwellings were badly run down and dilapidated.

A Start Towards Recovery

Back in 1928, a graduate student in the University of North Carolina named Arthur Raper wrote a doctor's thesis on Greene and Macon Counties, Georgia. It was here that the reconstruction really began for Greene County. In 1934, Raper was given a Rosenwald Fund Fellowship to make a further study of these same two Georgia counties. The result was a book, "Preface to Peasantry." Dr. Will W. Alexander, then director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, and a director of the Rosenwald Fund, was interested in the county. When he became Administrator of the Farm Security Administration in 1937, he was anxious to make a concerted effort to rebuild Greene County, as a demonstration of what could be done for really low-income farm people with the help of the government rehabilitation program.

FSA already had two supervisors in the county, aided by voluntary advisory committees on rehabilitation loans and farm debt adjustment. The Soil Conservation Service had six supervisors on the scene. Greene was also one of the first counties designated for tenant purchase loans under the Bankhead-Jones Act of 1937, and an advisory committee had been set up

to deal with the loan applications under this FSA program. The county was, therefore, a logical choice for undertaking a unified agricultural program.

The State Extension Service, in cooperation with the Bureau of Agricultural Economics intended to set up a county planning organization in the fall of 1938 but lack of funds postponed this activity until 1939. The task of coordination of all efforts in Greene County was finally undertaken by a County Program Planning Committee composed of 21 local people from every section of the county. Field Representatives of every interested government agency served as advisory members. These members were the following:

- County Agent
- Assistant County Agent
- Home Demonstration Agent
- District Farm Supervisor, FSA
- 5 Farm Supervisors, FSA
- 5 Home Supervisors, FSA
- 2 Vocational Agricultural Teachers
- Junior Soil Conservationist, CCC
- Junior Soil Conservationist, SCS

This committee was backed up by the State Land-Use Planning Committee, whose Executive Committee is composed of representatives of the five agencies most directly involved:

- Director of Extension (Chairman)
- State Director, FSA
- Administrative Officer in Charge, State AAA Office
- State Coordinator, SCS
- State BAE Representative (Secretary)

The first thing to be done was to be done was to make an accurate and comprehensive survey of Greene County, to determine the extent and direction of the coordinated effort which would be necessary. For this purpose a County Land-Use Planning Committee was created, with a local farmer as chairman and the county agent as secretary. This committee was to be responsible to the County Program Planning Committee for the preparation of a county report on land use.

Farmers Appraise Their Own County

The committee's task was not confined to taking inventory of the agricultural land resources in the county. It was to make recommendations, based on experience and all available information, regarding necessary adjustments in the use of the land. Further than this, the committee was to "provide a basis for correlating the thinking of farm

people with that of county, state, and federal agencies which have responsibilities in the development and execution of programs concerned with the use of the land." The committee began its final report with this statement of aims: "The ultimate objective of this work is the development of a county agricultural program which will contribute to better standards of living for farm people and to conservation and improvement of agricultural resources."

The procedure followed by the Land-Use Planning Committees was something like this: First the entire county committee took a trip around the county, accompanied by the county agent and the assistant project leader. This trip was simply for observation and study of the present use of the land as a basis for working out areas with closely related problems, so that they could be divided up for purposes of more intensive study. Areas were set off on the basis of (1) physical features, such as soil and topography; (2) present land uses or types of farming (for example, timber areas contrasted with areas of open pasture); and (3) land-use problems (for example, areas with very little erosion, and others with severe erosion).

Then, to perform the actual work of surveying and mapping the land-use areas, three subcommittees of the County Land-Use Planning Committee were set up. Each of these was composed of those members of the County Committee who lived in the community to be surveyed, plus certain other local farmers chosen because of their familiarity with local conditions. The technical field personnel of the various government agencies stood ready to advise and assist the local committees in their work. When the preliminary survey was finished, the Community Committees went to work, checking the areas mapped out, writing accurate descriptions of these areas, classifying the land within each area, and drawing up recommendations as to the adjustments needed in land-use and farm practices on each class of land.

The County Land-Use Planning Committee did a thorough job, and wrote up a report setting forth its recommendations for action by Federal, State, and local authorities. The report detailed also the facts about the land and the people which justified its recommendations. What exactly did the committee discover about Greene County?

First, the committee found 266,240 acres, of which about 198,000 acres were classed as farm land. Of these, only 20,000 acres could be cultivated without special precautions against erosion, and 20,000 additional acres could be used if simple erosion-control measures were placed in effect. All the rest of the land, the committee concluded needed intensive erosion-control treatment if it was to be cultivated.

Two very different types of land were found. About two-thirds of the county is composed of the "red lands," chiefly Davidson and heavy Cecil clay. The red land section is hilly, with rolling divides sloping steeply to the larger streams. These divides are cut by countless lateral

streams and ravines, usually narrow and deep, with steeply sloping sides. Thus the red lands are peculiarly liable to erosion, and parts of this section were found to be "so rough and broken that agriculture is carried on only with great difficulty." There is one gully 40 feet deep and over a mile long. The topography of the grey lands, on the other hand, is less in danger of erosion. The land is more gently rolling, the stream valleys not so deep. However, the soil types in the southern grey land section, predominantly Appling coarse sandy loam, are more susceptible to erosion than those in the north.

The committee found the severe erosion to be largely due to lack of proper care of the land. Terracing was inadequate and improper. Although there was terracing of a sort on a large percentage of the farms, correct terracing was found on only ten per cent of the land. Row crops had been planted in the same fields year after year, and in many sections there had been a complete lack of either winter or summer cover crops.

Farmers Prescribe Their Own Medicine

After the sick land had been examined and its various diseases diagnosed, the Committee wrote a prescription for control of erosion and improvement of the soil. For all the crop land, contour planting, proper terracing, and crop rotation were prescribed. Strip-cropping, winter and summer legumes, and the application of limestone and phosphate were recommended for various areas. Existing pastures were to be improved through fertilization with lime and phosphate, reseeding or resodding, removal of brush, and weed control. New pastures were to be developed on present cropland unsuited for cultivation and on present woodlands which are well adapted for pasture. In line with this policy, 15,000 acres of submarginal land were soon set aside to be purchased by the Government for development as pasture or woodland.

The 1935 Census showed the average size of Greene County Farms to be 113 acres, with 40.5 acres in cropland. The committee attacked the problem of the "family-size farm," and came out with the estimate that minimum size farm for the county should be 150 acres, with 50 acres in cultivation, 50 acres in open improved permanent pasture, and 50 acres in timber. "The committee believes that this size is practical throughout the county, but good results can be obtained with smaller farms in some areas." The committee emphasized that the 150-acre farm was a minimum, and that the most efficient unit would be a farm of 300 acres or more, on which machinery could be used to lower costs and increase production.

In 1934, tenants and sharecroppers represented 74 per cent of the 1,761 farm operators. Of this non-owning group, only 38 per cent were sharecroppers, the other 62 per cent being tenants operating farms largely under their own management. However, the committee found that most of the tenants had insufficient equipment to do proper farm work and that their

past experience had in most cases poorly qualified them as independent farm operators. "Only about 20 per cent of the white tenants and sharecroppers and 10 per cent of the Negro tenants and sharecroppers," read the report, "are now qualified to operate successfully as owners."

Tenancy, then, would remain a large and serious problem in Greene County for some time. This indicated a two-fold approach -- the improvement of landlord-tenant relationships and the development of the abilities of the tenants to operate their own farms. Six methods of accomplishing these ends were recommended:

- (1) Long-term lease with provision for termination by either party for cause.
- (2) Provision of better homes for tenants.
- (3) Closer cooperation between landlord and tenant in soil improvement work.
- (4) Compensation of tenants for soil improvement and corresponding penalties for wasteful land-use practices.
- (5) Provision by the landlord of more winter employment for sharecroppers.
- (6) Education of tenants to increase interest in farm ownership and soil improvement.

Beginnings of a Unified Program

Meetings had already been held, both in Atlanta and in Greene County, by representatives of various agencies within the Department of Agriculture, to discuss the proposed unified program for the county. At first only the Farm Security Administration, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and the Extension Service were represented. Later the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, the Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service, and the Office of Land-Use Coordination also participated in the discussion. The report of the County Land-Use Planning Committee, published in 1939, served as a "GO" signal for the activities of all these agencies.

Not that some of them had been inactive even before the light turned green. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration distributed some \$100,000 in benefits in Greene County during 1938. Research agencies of the Department of Agriculture had made a survey in 1937 with a view to the purchase of submarginal land under Title III of the Bankhead-Jones Act, and had included four counties, Greene among them, in a land-purchase project. In 1938, purchases had been largely confined to Greene County, in anticipation of the unified program there, and already funds had been

set aside for the purchase of 8,500 acres of land in the northern part of the county during 1939. The farmers of Greene and four neighboring counties had set up a soil conservation district with the assistance of the Soil Conservation Service. In line with the unified program, most of the survey work undertaken by the district was assigned to Greene County, and by the beginning of 1939 there were 18 or 20 employees of the Soil Conservation Service working in the county.

We have seen that the Farm Security Administration had a rehabilitation program and a tenant purchase program in Greene County before that county was singled out for unified planning. By 1938, 150 families in the county had received rehabilitation loans, to enable them to buy the livestock and equipment necessary for a sound and permanent system of farming. Under the stimulus of the unified county program, 520 loans were made in 1939. In 1940, 535 farm families received loans, 45 of which were new clients. By June 30, 1940, the total case load was 586. In addition, there were 10 tenants who had been set up on their own land with tenant purchase loans.

The rehabilitation loans run for five years in all but 22 cases. A few longer term loans have been made, where it was necessary to make an especially large number of repairs and improvements on the farm, and where full cooperation was forthcoming from the landlord.

A particularly interesting development in Greene County has been the building of improvements in lieu of cash rent. In these cases the Farm Security Administration would "advance" rent to the landlords, by building barns and other outbuildings, repairing the house, or developing the land. A typical agreement of this kind might work as follows: The Government agrees to lease the landlord's farm for a period of five years, at \$100 a year. The landlord agrees that \$250 of the rent be advanced for stipulated improvements. The improvements may be done either by the landlord, or by the Farm Security Administration and the tenant together. Thus the landlord, in return for the use of his land, receives \$50 a year in cash, plus \$250 worth of improvements.

The Farm Security Administration has advanced rent in this way on 161 of the farms on which it has taken five-year leases as part of its rehabilitation loan program. A total of \$31,900 has been advanced, \$13,470 for land development and \$18,430 for house repairs and construction of new barns and other outbuildings. Two thousand acres of land have been terraced under these rent agreements, and the terracing of an additional 4,000 acres is called for under agreements now in effect. In some cases the landlord is able to finance his own building program without having rent advanced to him for the purpose. In all, 218 houses and 178 barns had been built or repaired by June, 1940.

Rehabilitation loans in Greene County, as in the rest of the country, are accompanied by sound advice in farm and home management from experts paid by the FSA. The farm management supervisor for Greene County has five assistants -- one of them a Negro college graduate in agriculture.

In addition, there are five home management supervisors, one of them a Negro woman.

Planning for Better Farms and Houses

The supervisors visit the farmers and their wives in the farm homes, and sometimes meetings are held in the local school building or in the house of one of the borrower families. Before a loan is made, a farm management plan is worked out by the farmer, in consultation with the FSA supervisor. In this plan are set out the estimated costs and returns of crops and livestock. Emphasis is placed on growing food for home consumption, with a variety of cash crops so that cash income will not depend entirely upon the uncertain price of a single product. The importance of erosion control and soil-building practices is also stressed.

Under the stimulus of these plans and the activity by all the agencies concerned, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of farms planting winter cover and soil-building crops. In the fall of 1939, between 40 and 50 per cent of the county's farms were planting Austrian winter peas, vetch, crimson clover, and other winter legumes for soil-building purposes. From 70 to 80 per cent of the farms are planted to summer legumes, principally after small grains or inter-planted with corn.

Crop rotation is also being widely practiced, in line with the County Land-Use Planning Committee's recommendation that every farm in the county rotate all its cropland. One of two systems of rotation is generally used, and both have the blessing of the committee:

- (A) 1st year: Cotton followed by small grain.
2nd year: Small grain followed by summer legumes, and these followed by winter legumes.
3rd year: Corn following winter legumes
- (B) 1st year: Small grain followed by summer legumes.
2nd year: Cotton followed by winter legumes.
3rd year: Corn followed by small grain.

The development of livestock on a commercial scale has been in the past held up by a lack of winter feed and a lack of capital for fencing grazing areas. However, there are large areas of native grasses which could furnish excellent summer grazing. Much of the woodland is also suitable for pasturage -- indeed, it is useful for little else, since practically all of the marketable timber in the county has been cut. At the present time, therefore, the efforts of the farm management experts are directed toward getting sufficient livestock on each farm to supply home needs for livestock products. For the average family, this means two milk cows, four meat hogs, and about 25 hens. As the winter feed

supply is built up and capital becomes available through FSA loans for fencing off grazing areas, it is expected that commercial livestock can become an important income-producing activity in the county.

Closely related to the farm plan is the home management plan, which is made out by the farmer's wife with the help of the home management supervisor. Here again, the emphasis is on production of food for home consumption -- more hogs for meat and for breeding, more cows for home-used milk, more chickens and eggs, more syrup, more potatoes, more dried peas and beans, more nuts, more corn and wheat. Economy in raising a garden is stressed; the families are taught to save their home-grown seed, to save all fertilizer, and to increase it by the addition of hay or leaves. Home orchards are encouraged. By 1939, all families receiving loans from FSA had agreed to improve their present orchard, if they had one, or to start a new one. Finally, emphasis is placed on the preservation in cans or jars of enough food to tide the family over the unproductive winter months. For this purpose the borrower families are urged to buy pressure cookers and enough jars to preserve food for the whole family, and to have adequate storage space in their cellars. Sometimes, when these facilities are inadequate, provision is made for them in a supplementary loan.

New Schools, New Teachers

The poverty and hopelessness which has been the lot of Greene County was, of course, reflected in the county's educational set-up. Education in rural areas is generally below the national average, measured by expenditure per child, by number and quality of teachers, by number of school days per year, or by almost any other yardstick. Education in the rural South is below the national average for rural areas. And education in Greene County was below the average for the rural South. Most of the schools were tumbledown one-room shacks. The 40 Negro schools were run by teachers with only high school degrees and county licenses. Although farming had always been the means of livelihood for almost everybody in the county, vocational agriculture was not taught in any of the county's schools.

At the beginning of 1939, the County Board of Education employed 17 college graduates with State teaching licenses to replace some of the county-licensed teachers. Since then, as additional vacancies occur in the teaching staff, they are filled with trained and competent teachers.

In July, 1938, the County Board of Education, State Vocational Department, and FSA combined their resources to employ five vocational teachers. The two white teachers each serve two of the four existing white schools at Siloan, White Plains, Woodville, and Penfield. The three Negro vocational teachers at first had to take care of three or four schools apiece, pending construction of new consolidated schools for the Negro school population.

Plans were soon made to construct new buildings and renovate those existing facilities which were not beyond repair. Work was begun in 1939 on four vocational buildings, one home economics building, two four-room schools for Negro children, and repairs to two of the white school buildings. Additional work approved included two other vocational buildings, five vocational shops, ten new four-room schools for Negroes, and repairs to other Negro schools throughout the county. The total cost of this work was estimated at \$166,000. The County Board of Education acted as sponsor of the building project, and agreed to put up \$43,500 as its contribution toward the work. The Work Projects Administration supplies the rest.

New Health for a County

In health, as in education, poverty leads to neglect. In Greene County malnutrition and near-starvation were widespread. The sources of drinking water were inadequately protected, sanitary facilities were improper and inadequate, and the uncontrolled siltation and damming of streams were a constant menace to health. Hospital facilities were inadequate, and dental and physical hygiene instruction were almost nonexistent.

In May, 1938, a medical care program, similar to those in use among FSA borrowers in other parts of the country, was started in Greene County. At the outset, the Medical Association drew into its membership 130 of the 150 borrower families; and by the end of June, 1940, 515 families, including 2,710 persons, had joined. Each family pays in advance for medical attention during the month; dues for a family average \$12, or a little more, per year. Membership in the Association provides for hospital expenses and medical supplies, as well as attention by local physicians. The members have free choice of participating doctors, and at the end of each month the doctors submit their bills to the Association. If there is not enough money in the Association's fund to go around, the doctors' bills are pared down pro rata until they are within the Association's ability to pay. From March through June of 1940, for example, charges for hospitalization, drugs, and physicians' services totalled \$6,720.75, of which \$3,055.71 was paid by the Association. Hospital fees were paid to the extent of 96 per cent, but only 41 per cent of the fees for doctors and drugs were met. Low as this percentage is, it is as much as, or more than, these same doctors were getting from their low-income rural patients before the program was started. A dental service has recently been placed in operation on the same basis as the Medical Association. During the first few months the participating families, many of whom had never before been in a dentist's office, were able to pay 76 per cent of the fees charged for dental work.

Two nurses and a social worker were employed by FSA at an early stage in the Greene County program. With so small a staff, emphasis



must necessarily be on prevention of disease, although at the same time, the nurses try to do what they can for those already in bad health. The County Health Officer and a Sanitary Engineer are also cooperating in Greene County's health program. Periodic visits are made to each family, and the nurses discuss with them immunization and preventable diseases, such as diphtheria, typhoid and dysentery. Diet is always discussed; in every home is placed a drawing with a description of a balanced diet and sample diets are mimeographed and sent around to the families.

Particular attention is paid to prenatal mothers. Each prenatal case is visited once a month for the first six months, and twice each month of the last three months. Each mother gets a prenatal book, and letters stressing the importance of periodic visits to the doctor and proper diet are sent out each month to every expectant mother.

Cooperation between the nurses and the home management supervisors is essential if health conditions are to be improved. The nurses work with both the farm and home supervisors in calling attention to unsanitary privies and dilapidated and unscreened homes. The supervisors, in turn, explain the medical cooperative to the families, emphasize the importance of better and more food, and check carefully on the condition of toilets, wells, and screens in the homes they visit. As home plans are made and health problems are discovered, they are reported immediately to the nurse.

During 1939, and the first half of 1940, 225 houses were screened, pumps were installed or improved in 240 wells. A total of 340 sanitary units have been installed on farms operated by FSA clients.

The County Gets Together

Economic rehabilitation could not afford to neglect the social needs of the county. After the first few months of home management work, supervisors found that the families craved get-togethers. There was, however, no organized recreation in the county, and it was made difficult by poor transportation and bad roads. The few church services developed into real social gatherings; the people remained all day and talked for weeks about the good time they had.

The first step was taken when community "sings" were organized at the school buildings in the various communities. When the first "sing" was held, a notice of it appeared in the county newspaper. It was followed by a flood of letters to FSA officials, urging them to have more "sings." Leaders in the various communities wrote in: "Please don't forget us when you are organizing those sings," they said in effect. More "sings" were held in local school buildings, and school busses were used for free transportation.

The success of these get-togethers encouraged the idea of a county get-together. With the help of the WPA Recreation Division, a singing pageant was put on, sponsored by the local Lions Club and two leading citizens from each community. A large chorus was organized, composed of singers from every community in which a "sing" had been held. The affair was a huge success; three thousand people came to the pageant, in school busses, in wagons and buggies, on mules and horses, in cars and on foot. The crowd was so great that a third of the people could not get inside the building where the pageant was being held. A full-time WPA recreational leader has now been appointed for Greene County, and organized recreation is now a permanent part of the unified county program.

Greene County is making progress. At the end of 1939, the Farm Security Administration made a survey to see how its rehabilitation borrowers were getting along. In Greene County FSA's field workers found that the average family's annual net income, had risen from \$131 before it received an FSA loan, to \$246 in the 1939 crop year -- an increase of 88 per cent. An average increase of 47 per cent in net worth also was made by the Greene County borrowers. But perhaps most impressive of all were the figures on the value of food produced at home. The survey showed that in the year before coming on the FSA program, the average borrower family had produced only \$98 worth of food on his own land. By 1939 this same family had more than doubled its home production, to \$208.

Greene County is on its way out of the economic swamp in which poor land and poorer people have long been struggling. It is only one of 3,070 counties in the United States, but it has been one of the hardest hit by natural and man-made disasters. Thousands of people have literally been brought back to life through the help of Federal agencies, and these same activities have, at long last, stopped the progressive ruination of the soil.

But more than this, Greene County is a sort of test-tube demonstration of what can be done with the very bottom income groups in the way of permanent rehabilitation. The program in Greene County has not been going long enough to make a final evaluation of its economic success, but it has been going long enough to indicate that coordinated planning and cooperative work on the part of all interested governmental agencies can mean more rehabilitation and better rehabilitation than any single agency could hope to accomplish alone. (Greene County is a picture on a small scale of what a unified social and economic program can do for destitute farm people.)

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U. S. Department of Agriculture
Farm Security Administration
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